

REMARKS

In reply to the Final Office Action dated March 23, 2004, Applicants propose to cancel claims 1-4, 25, and 26, without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter therein, amend claims 20 and 27 to correct minor informalities, and amend FIGs. 3A, 4, and 6 to correct several minor informalities. Because the proposed amendments to the claims incorporate features that were present, in varying degrees, in the originally filed claims, this Amendment does not present any new issues that would either require further consideration, or materially complicate the issues for purposes of Appeal. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request appropriate entry and consideration of this proposed After-Final Amendment. Upon entry of this Amendment, claims 5-20, 22-24, and 27 will remain currently pending.

With respect to the drawings, the Examiner has objected to FIGs. 3A, 4, and 6 based on a number of informalities. To obviate the Examiner's objections and improve the understanding of the invention, Applicants propose to amend each of these FIGS. as the Examiner suggests. As shown in the annotated drawings provided in the attached Appendix B and in the replacement drawings provided in the attached Appendix A, Applicants have: (1) amended Fig. 3A by replacing reference number "31" with new reference number -31a--; (2) amended Fig. 4 by replacing reference numbers "31" and "78c" with new reference numbers "31a" and "76c", respectively; and (3) amended Fig. 6 by replacing reference number "31" with new reference number -31a--. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner approve each of these changes.

With respect to the claims, Applicants appreciate the Examiner's indication that claims 5-20, 22-24, and 27 are allowed. In light of this indication of allowable subject matter, Applicants respectfully request that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing claims 5-20, 22-24, and 27 in condition for allowance. Applicants submit that the proposed amendments of claims 20 and 27 do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, and further since the claims are deemed allowable if rewritten in independent form. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

Finally, Applicants submit that the entry of the Amendment would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner continue to dispute the patentability of the pending claims. Applicants, therefore, request the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration of the application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Additionally, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned Applicants' representatives at (202) 408-6052 if it would be helpful to further expedite the prosecution of this application and, thereby, minimize time and expense.

If any extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 is required to obtain entry of this response, and not requested by attachment, such extension is hereby requested. If there are any fees due under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or 1.17 that are not enclosed, including any fees required for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136, please charge those fees to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

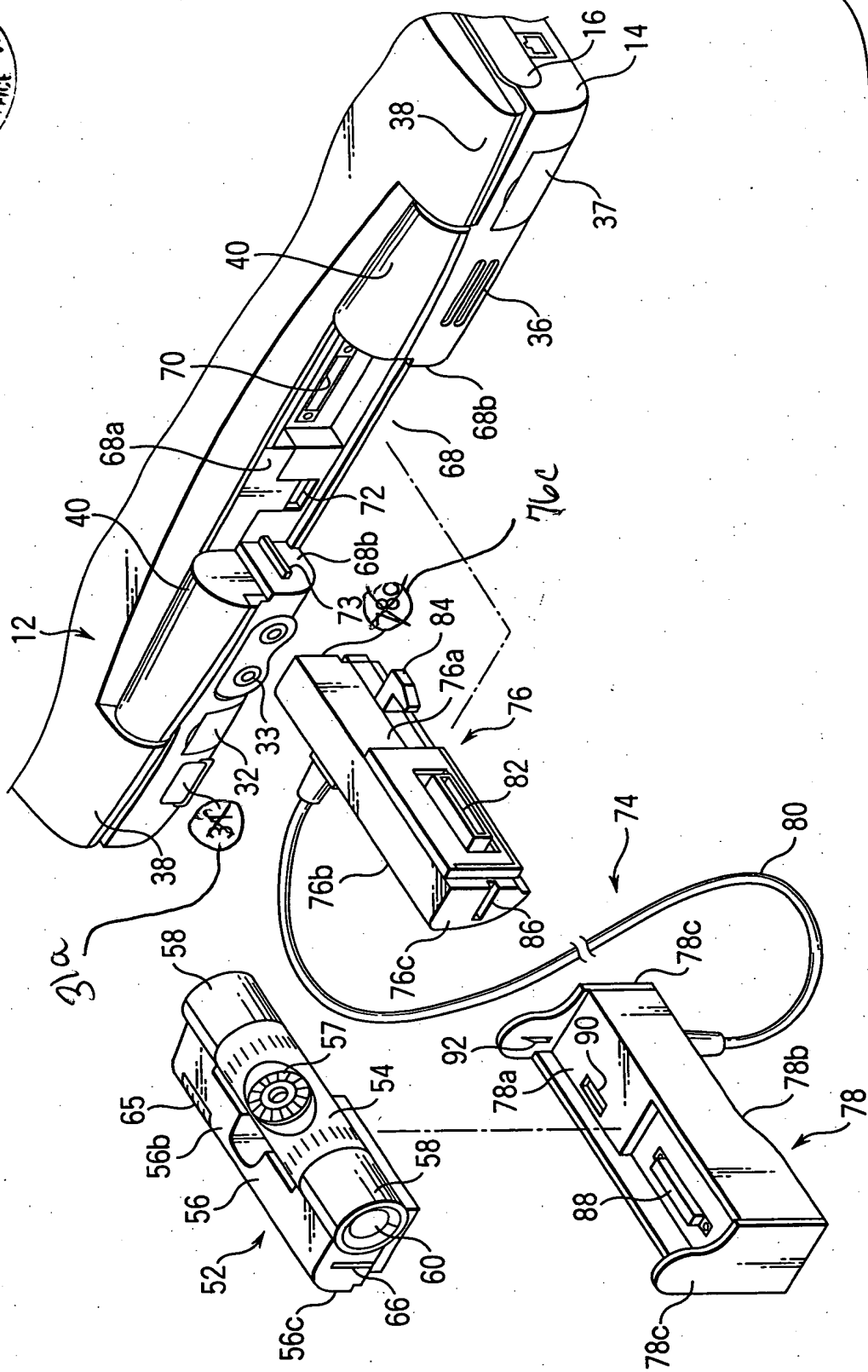
**FINNEGAN, HENDERSON, FARABOW,
GARRETT & DUNNER, L.L.P.**

By: 

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Dated: June 23, 2004





ANNOTATED SHEET

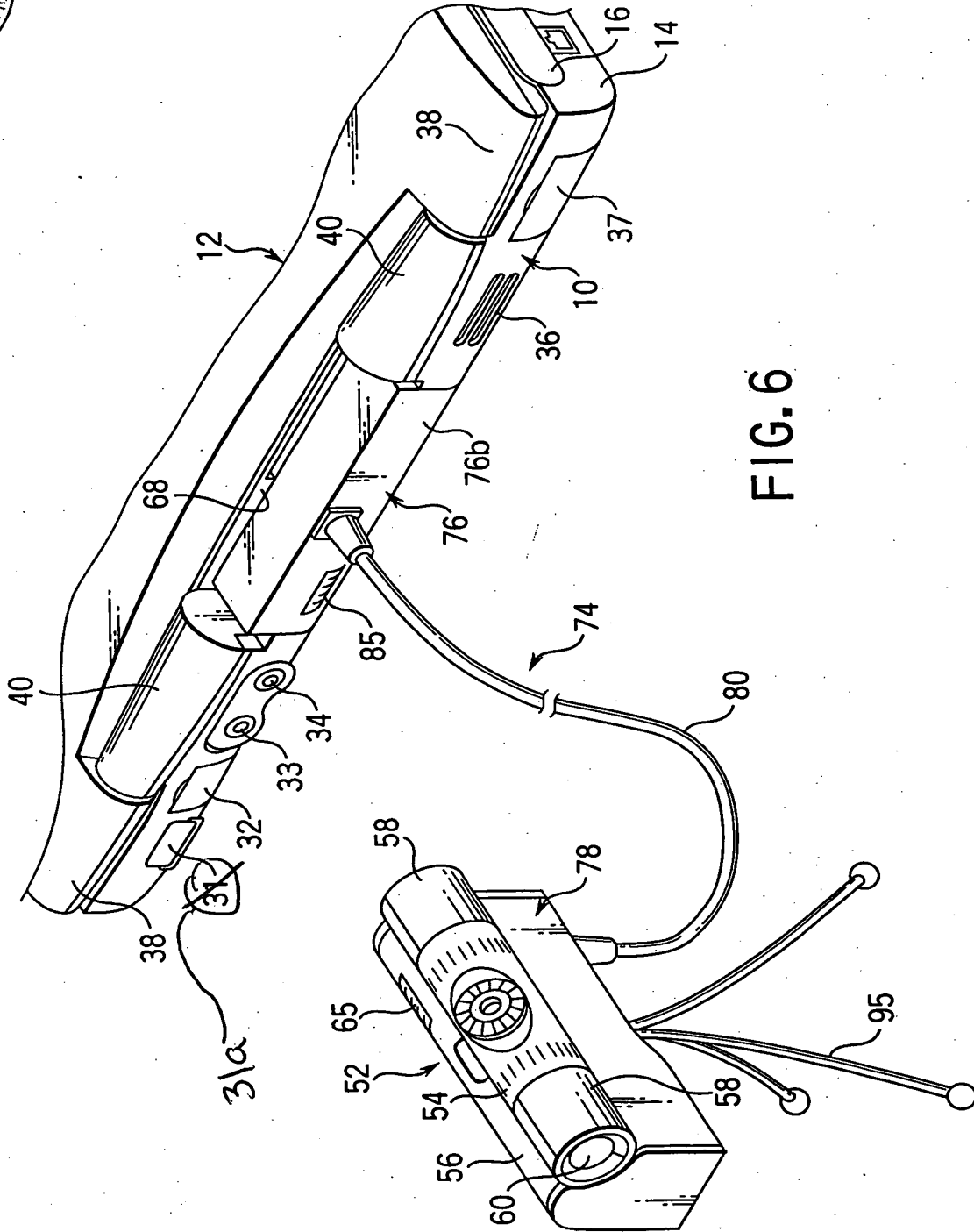


FIG. 6